

In the caves where it occurs the snake is common, I have captured three in a morning, and seen one or two every time I have visited the caves.

I am sending for the Society's Museum a specimen of the local variety.

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SELANGOR, Oct., 1898.

No. XV.—FURTHER NOTES ON THE VARIETIES OF
COLUBER TENIURUS.

Only the other day I contributed to this Journal a note on the highly specialized form of *Coluber teniurus*, which dwells in the Stygian darkness of the great limestone caves near Kuala Lumpur, Selangor. When I wrote, the snake had only been obtained in the Malay Peninsula in this pale-coloured and exclusively cave-dwelling variety. The much darker typical coloration described by Mr. Boulenger, however, induced me to doubt whether the species was similarly a cave-dweller in other parts of its wide range, and to ask in the Society's Journal for information on this point. I imagine now that the typically coloured snakes are not cave-dwellers, as since writing I have obtained a single *C. teniurus* in the jungle, and find it quite different from the pale cave-form. I believe this is the only time it has been taken in the jungle in the Peninsula, and the specimen seems to me noteworthy, as it also differs very considerably from Mr. Boulenger's description.

The circumstances under which my specimen was procured were as follows : On the night of October 6th being on a collecting trip, I arrived at a small halting bungalow on the Pahang Road, 8 miles from Kuala Lumpur. There was no light in the bungalow, and I went into the bed-room and felt in the dressing-table drawer for some matches which I remembered to have been there on my last visit. In doing this I put my hand on to a large snake lying coiled up ; I felt the coils slide into motion, and as I jerked my hand away, heard the soft thud of the beast's nose against the side of the drawer as it struck at me. I procured a light at once—needless to say elsewhere !—and found the snake to be a large *Coluber teniurus*, which must have found its way in from the surrounding jungle and been attracted by the rats, of which the drawer contained abundant traces.

The halting bungalow is surrounded for miles by dense jungle ; the nearest hills, moreover, are quartz and not limestone, and, as far as I saw—and I explored one of them very thoroughly—have no caves in them at all. The place is exactly $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant from the big limestone caves at Batu as the crow flies, but far more as a snake would crawl, the intervening country being rough, hilly, and densely wooded. It seemed, therefore, reasonable to conclude that this particular snake was a jungle and not a cave-dweller, and I promptly boxed it alive for comparison with cave specimens, subsequently finding, as I expected, that it belongs to a much darker-coloured type. For

convenience of comparison I give in tabulated form descriptions of (1) the pale Malayan cave variety, (2) the typical coloration in other parts of its range, and (3) the jungle variety of the dark race obtained as described above.

The cave-dwelling form, of which Mr. Ridley's description is a very accurate one, seems to be remarkably constant to one type. In this instance, too, the variation in colour, which usually counts for little or nothing in the case of snakes, seems deserving of consideration when associated with, and apparently adapted to, the snake's exceptional habitat and surroundings. It appears to me that this is one of the cases for which the trinomial system of nomenclature is so suitable, and that, though hardly entitled to specific rank, this very marked form might well be indicated as *Coluber tenuurus ridleyi*, subsp. n.

While on the subject of these snakes I may mention that a friend recently came upon one, in the Batu caves, coiled into a cone round a much-crushed but still living bat, from which it appears that they occasionally kill their prey by constriction.

Colour Varieties of Coluber Taniurus.

(1) Description of Batu Cave specimens. (H.N. Ridley, "Jour. S.B.R.A.S." No. 31., p. 399).	(2) Description of typical examples in Brit. Mus. (Butler, "Fauna of India, Rep.," p. 333).	(3) Description of Selangor jungle example. (A. L. Butler).
HEAD: Bluish-grey; a black line through the eye.	HEAD: Grey-brown or olive; a black line through the eye.	HEAD: Centre greyish-brown; sides above eye-stripe bluish-grey; a black line through the eye.
NECK: Pale ochreous, each scale being tipped with isabelline.	NECK: Grey-brown or olive. <i>(Head and neck uniform).</i>	NECK: For 6 inches* behind head light olive-brown with a strong reddish tinge (caused by two small red dots on the point of each scale).
BACK: Do. getting paler towards the tail. <i>(No transverse lines or network).</i>	BACK: Interior portion grey-brown or olive with black transverse lines or network; posterior portion with a pale vertebral stripe between two broad black ones.	BACK: Greenish-olive, paling towards the tail into olivaceous-white between the lateral stripes.
BELLY: Pale yellowish-white	BELLY: Yellowish anteriorly, greyish behind.	BELLY: Creamy white.
TAIL: Has a white bar along the back line, and the under part is also pure white; along the sides runs a purplish-grey bar, becoming darker towards the tip, where it becomes black.	TAIL: A black stripe along each side of the posterior part of the belly and along each side of the tail, separated from the upper lateral stripe by a whitish streak.	TAIL: The lateral stripes at their commencement on the body warm brown, gradually shading into blackish on the tail; an indistinct bluish-grey line along each side of the belly, separating the creamy white of the ventrals from the olive of the upper surface.

* The specimen seemed about 6 feet in length.

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